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## **The changing debate on internationalisation of higher education**

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**Abstract.** “Internationalisation”, the growing border-crossing activities between national systems of higher education is losing ground to “globalisation”, increasing border-crossing activities of blurred national systems which is often employed to depict world-wide trends and growing global competition. This article addresses recent issues of knowledge transfer. It points out tensions between increasing diversity in higher education and efforts to facilitate recognition of prior studies on student mobility. It shows the diversity of steering and management policies with respect to internationalisation and globalisation. Finally, it asks whether globalisation of higher education has to be viewed as a manifestation of “turbo-capitalism” or could be viewed instead as a move towards “global understanding”.

**Keywords:** diversification, europeanisation, globalisation, international education, internationalisation, knowledge transfer, mobility, recognition of study abroad, system steering

### **Internationalisation – a key issue in the public debate on higher education**

As a rule, the public debate on higher education focuses on a single or possibly two or three issues at a certain point in time. Concerns, hopes and actions concentrate on select issues, and this priority might persist for about five years to at most a decade. The terms employed to depict these issues serve prioritisation, and they shape fashions. Often new terms and new constructs emerge over how one should view the world of higher education. When this period of attention ends, some concepts might have been successfully implemented, and some steps towards reform might have been realised, but, as a rule, the problems and issues persist and deserve continued attention.

In the past three or four decades, we noted quite similar debates in many countries. The striking similarity amidst obvious variety between countries often evoked suspicions that a strong influence of supra-national agencies exists and has spread these ideas like epidemics which higher education actors and observers are happy to take up any new terminological fashion. We experienced such periods of focus in debate

and action with respect to education and economic growth, equality of opportunity, improvement of teaching and staff development, links between higher education and the labour market (e.g. “practice-orientation”), diversification of higher education, higher education management, evaluation and trends towards a knowledge society.

Internationalisation of higher education became a key issue in Europe during the 1990s; therefore our priority placed on this is likely to come to an end soon. Terms with the ending “-sation” usually signal: there was a problem in the past and an opportunity for improvement, obviously supported by a trend with respect to this issue – in this case internationalisation. Thus, a number of phenomena in higher education are likely to have occurred which deserve to be called “-sation” without, however, having led to an end of such a process or the successful complete implementation of related policies.

Of course, for analysing such a trend or policy direction, researchers do not necessarily have to share the normative undercurrent of the debate. The status quo ante does not necessarily have to be very negative, and internationalisation also might imply many questionable elements such as destroying cultural heritage, diminishing language diversity, reducing variety of academic cultures and structures, quality decline or even supporting imperialist take-overs. But, by and large, scholars analysing the internationalisation of higher education tend to share the view that internationalisation opens up more desirable opportunities than it produces dangers.

### **Internationalisation, europeanisation, globalisation**

When higher education issues are discussed on a supra-national basis, obviously three terms are most often employed in Europe:

- international,
- European, and
- global.

If references made to a trend or a policy direction, we talk of internationalisation, Europeanisation and globalisation (cf. the overviews in Blumenthal et al. 1996; De Wit 2002; Wächter 1999).

The uses of these three terms are similar in two respects (see Knight 1996; Scott 1998; Teichler 1999; van der Wende 2001):

- First, all three terms claim there is a trend or a policy direction away from a more or less closed national system of higher education and therefore, as will be pointed out below, towards a growing role of

long-distance transport of knowledge in higher education and a more complex setting of multi-level actors and other forces.

- Second, all three terms might refer either to the changing context which poses a challenge for higher education or to changes which occur within higher education itself.

The uses of the three terms, however, differ in two respects as well.

First, they vary in the prime meaning:

- Internationalisation tends to address an increase of border-crossing activities amidst a more or less persistence of national systems of higher education.
- Globalisation tends to assume that borders and national systems as such get blurred or even might disappear.
- Europeanisation is the regionally defined version of either internationalisation or globalisation. At present it is more often the regional version of internationalisation than of globalisation (cf. Race 1997).

Second, specific issues tend to be linked to the use of the individual terms:

- Internationalisation is often discussed in relation to physical mobility, academic cooperation and academic knowledge transfer as well as international education.
- Europeanisation is addressed frequently when referring to cooperation and mobility. Beyond that it also covers such issues as integration, convergence of contexts, structures and substance (“European dimension”, “European culture”, “European citizen”, “European higher education space”) or to segmentation between regions of the world (“fortress Europe”).
- Globalisation is often associated with competition and market-steering, trans-national education, and finally with commercial knowledge-transfer (cf. El-Khawas 1994; Lenn 1999; Middlehurst 2000; Sadlak 2001).

One might ask in this context, how the terms internationalisation and globalisation relate to each other. Are they opposites? Do they express gradual differences on a continuum? Or are they related to each other dialectally in a way that every border-crossing leads to somewhat of a crumbling of borders, and that every global pressure leads to a national border-construction activity?

One might also ask whether the issues we like to discuss in close relationship to internationalisation or to globalisation are bound to be seen in relationship to individual terms, whether they are more or less coincidentally related to one of these terms and also could be related to the others. For example, is “trans-national” education coincidentally

discussed with reference to globalisation and could it be related to internationalisation as well, or is it bound to be linked to globalisation?

Since the late 1990s, we note a growing popularity of the term “globalisation” in Europe as well as other parts of the world. The use of the term “globalisation” almost seems to displace that of “internationalisation”. The term “global” is often employed merely to depict supra-national trends and policies related to marketisation, increasing supra-national competition as well as the growth of trans-national education and commercial knowledge transfer. The term seems to be used without any concern for whether these trends and policies are really related to a blurring of borders. Often, the term “global” could be substituted by “supra-national”, “supra-regional”, “world-wide”, or “world competition society”

### **Internationalisation or “Re-Internationalisation”**

The claim that higher education is internationalising or ought to internationalise is somewhat surprising because universities have long been considered one of society’s most international institutions. The knowledge stored, generated and transmitted is often universal (i.e. not systematically bound by borders). It was viewed desirable in higher education since a long time to gather information from all over the world and to generate innovation on world scale. Most academics hold cosmopolitan values in high esteem. Border-crossing communication and border-crossing reputation seem to be viewed as almost identical with “quality”, the most positive thing in academia.

We first note, however, that in the past higher education was divided between universal or international substance and national structure or organisation, be it funding, regulatory framework, governance, curricula, or credentials (see Kerr 1990, p. 5). Second, we observe that international activities, though principally accepted as valuable, are often relatively small in size. For example, only about two percent of the European student population enrol abroad, and graduate employment abroad in industrial societies is lower than migration of persons not having been enrolled in higher education (see Teichler and Jahr 2001, pp. 455–456).

Historians, however, make us aware that higher education’s strong national focus and relatively low level of mobility might have been temporary: for the two hundred years of the nation state dominance, the 19th century and the 20th century. For example, there are estimates that

intra-European students mobility, now possibly on the level of two or three percent, had been on the level of ten percent in the 17th century (see Neave 2002, p. 181). From such a view, the term “re-internationalisation” might be more appropriate to describe the current development.

### **Internationalisation – more than gradual change**

Most observers agree that the term “internationalisation” or similar terms are not employed to depict merely a gradual change or policies aiming for gradual change in higher education. Rather, we expect or observe qualitative leaps (Teichler 1999):

- We do not consider anymore “international” to be essential for only a few, select sectors of higher education. Instead, the conceptual divide between an internationally oriented university at the apex of the system, a national university at an intermediate level and a regional university on a more moderate level is obsolete. All higher education institutions have to be international, national and possibly local – a claim, which is underscored with the help of terms such as “glocal” or “glonacal”.
- International activities in higher education institutions are not viewed anymore as casuistic ones but as regular and systemic ones, which have to be systematised and embedded.
- International activities in higher education institutions are no longer marginal, or completely handled by international committees and offices segmented from the main stream of the university life. Instead, international affairs are taken up in all arenas of decision-making and administration.
- International education is no longer confined to internationalisation specialists (e.g. to scholars and students in foreign language philologies, area studies, cultural anthropology and international relations) but touches all areas of study and research to a certain extent. This list of expected or perceived leaps forward is by no means complete.

### **Areas of policy and action**

Analyses undertaken on changes in higher education termed “internationalisation” or similarly tend to address five areas of policies and activities:

- the knowledge dimension, or more specifically, matters related to the border-crossing movement of knowledge,
- validation and recognition of teaching, learning and research results,
- issues of international homogeneity or variety of structural elements of higher education (e.g. entry qualifications for study and admission systems, study programmes, degrees and professional rights related to degrees, types of institutions of higher education, staff, funding modes),
- the scope of actors' policies (e.g. national versus international policies of higher education institutions or educational ministries), and
- higher education steering as a whole (e.g. the role of national governments, national or international professional associations, international organisations, global markets, etc., as well as the modes of steering).

The aim below is not so much to summarise major findings of available analysis but to emphasise the discussion of conceptual frameworks explicitly or implicitly employed in research or in the public debate.

### **The knowledge dimensions of internationalisation**

There is not any generally agreed conceptual framework for structuring or classifying knowledge with respect to internationalisation. Various efforts have been made at systematisation. For example, the first major comparative project on student mobility, which was undertaken in the 1980s, drew from preceding research and discussions over classifying learning areas and the possible impact of learning supported by study abroad as educational, linguistic, cultural and professional (Opper et al. 1990).

Based on recent research over mobility and cooperation in the framework of European programmes, I observe three areas of learning and research related to internationalisation:

- knowledge transfer,
- international education and research, and
- border-crossing communication and discourse.

*Knowledge-transfer:* Knowledge in normal disciplines (i.e. not specialised on international issues) is more frequently, more intensively and more rapidly transferred from one country to the other. This is undertaken, as will be discussed below, through various means, notably through media (books, electronic media and similar means), physical

mobility (conferences, study abroad, academic staff exchange, etc.), joint curricula and research projects as well as trans-national education.

*International education and research:* Certain areas of knowledge focus on the international dimension, for example on border-crossing, foreign and distant phenomena and international comparison (e.g. foreign language philology, area studies, international relations). At times characterised by a trend of internationalisation, the role of international education is clearly growing. On the one hand the number of students and the needed teaching and research capacity are likely to grow in the areas that genuinely address other cultures, societies, comparison or international relations because there will be more demand for these skills in the graduate labour market and research-based problem-solving. On the other hand, in areas not primarily addressing other cultures like comparison and international relations, demand is also expanding for foreign language proficiency and field knowledge from other countries (cf. van der Wende 1996).

*Border-crossing communication and discourse:* Learning and research in an international setting is one way of experiencing different views in a creative manner (e.g. being confronted with different theories, methodologies and field knowledge in order to reflect and relativise one's own past conceptual frameworks, to broaden one's horizon, to think comparatively and eventually to develop more complex perspectives). International communication and discourse is not necessarily the only possible means of promoting leaps forward in reflective thinking but it is a relative safe and successful strategy for shaking the old established perspectives because of an all-embracing confrontation to a culture different from that at home. Results of analyses addressing student mobility suggest that this is the most salient impact of study abroad (for example Teichler and Maiworm 1997, pp. 123–134).

It is obvious that the impact of internationalisation in these three areas of knowledge will vary substantially by academic discipline. However, any knowledge improvement in all three areas would be useful in almost each research discipline and field of study.

Moreover, available research suggests that internationalisation often turns out to be valuable for knowledge improvement in unexpected ways (for example Opper et al. 1990, p. 213). While learning at home and doing a research project in a team of a single country often follow highly described paths with largely predetermined results, internationalisation is a deliberate mechanism for making surprises likely yet, by definition, with limited anticipation about what the surprises will be.

Thus, internationalisation is both a high-risk and low-risk strategy for knowledge improvement.

### **Rules of knowledge transfer and internationalisation**

International communication, cooperation and mobility have always served to transfer knowledge vertically (i.e. from places where a higher level of knowledge exists or where certain special knowledge have been accumulated to places of a lower level of knowledge or places with knowledge gaps in certain areas). Therefore, a more substantial and more rapid downward flow of knowledge can be expected from the growing trend towards internationalisation of higher education.

Knowledge transactions differ from transaction of goods and services principally because those who give knowledge to others do not lose what they give. In contrast, those who transfer goods and services, actually lose materials or work time and therefore have to be compensated in order to give. Academic knowledge transfer takes this specific element of knowledge transaction into account: those who offer their academic knowledge to others do not lose that knowledge, they only lose the exclusiveness of knowledge. Therefore, as a rule, they are compensated for this loss of exclusiveness by reference to the origin of this knowledge, through citation and by gain of reputation based on the creation of new knowledge.

On the way toward the knowledge society, academically-based knowledge is expected to expand substantially. Therefore the matter of how costs can be borne becomes a more salient issue. Also, academically-based knowledge becomes more relevant socially, both for commercially organised processes of transfer of goods and services as well as for transfer in the public sphere and various private spheres (leisure, family, etc.) which are not commercially organised. This obviously leads to an inclination on the part of governments and higher education institutions to move part of knowledge transaction in higher education away from the arena of open academic knowledge transfer to a new arena where monetary rewards are customary: commercial knowledge transfer (substantial tuition fees to cover the costs of generating knowledge, patents, production and sale of secret knowledge, etc.).

The trend towards an increasing proportion of commercial knowledge transfer in higher education is not an automatic and irreversible one but it is strongly influenced by institutional and national higher

education and research policies. Increased commercial knowledge transfer is not specifically an international or global phenomenon. It can be observed in national contexts as well though it is debated in international and global contexts in a very heated way. This certainly suggests that the issue of legitimacy of international commercialisation of knowledge transfer is more sensitive than the legitimacy of commercialisation of knowledge transfer in a national arena. In appreciating the valuable tradition of academic knowledge transfer, we could argue that those who rob others through the sale of hitherto free academic knowledge believe that robbing foreigners is more noble than robbing fellow-country-men, while those who are robbed believe that being robbed by foreigners is more mean than being robbed by fellow-country-men.

It is often argued that the increase of commercial knowledge transfer across nations is typically a phenomenon of globalisation. However, one could argue the opposite. The governments of major “knowledge exporting” countries are enormously active in shaping the rules of border-crossing commercial knowledge transfer in order to maximise their national gains.

### **Modes of knowledge transfer**

The most frequent border-crossing modes of knowledge transfer in academia are those of:

- knowledge media (books, films, letters, e-mail messages, artefacts, etc.),
- physical mobility of scholars and students,
- collaborative research and joint teaching/learning projects, and
- trans-national education.

Here, we shall only discuss the issue of physical mobility because its role tends to be viewed differently when discussed with reference to the terms internationalisation, Europeanisation and globalisation. Physical mobility was in the lime-light of discussion when the term “internationalisation” became very popular in higher education debates (see Altbach and Teichler 2001; European Commission 1994; Teichler 1998). There are many reasons which might explain why physical mobility is popular in academia. For example, academically trained people enjoy new experiences, they can easily cope with uncertainties and surprises because they are more likely to understand them, and how they have acquired new knowledge and insight.

We have argued that the spread of the term “internationalisation” as a key issue of higher education in Europe was accompanied by a rapid expansion of physical mobility in Europe irrespective of what is the “egg” and what the “hen”. Therefore, this increasing student mobility in Europe differed systematically from most prior student mobility in the world (Teichler and Maiworm 1997, pp. 3–4):

- The mobility of students in Europe, in contrast to the predominantly “vertical” mobility between continents, is predominantly “horizontal”. It implies establishing of communication between partners of more or less the same level of knowledge. Horizontal mobility might be less efficient in ensuring substantial and rapid knowledge transfer but it offers a better framework for border-crossing communication and discourse that can create a “win-win situation” among the partners in reaching a higher level of reflection.
- Moreover, mobility within Europe is “mobility light”: mobility among not-too-distant cultures. Destructive culture shocks are less likely than anywhere else and rapid insight in the international diversity as well as learning based on that insight are more likely to be achieved.

We can expect that “physical mobility” will continue to grow in absolute terms in the near future, but certainly it will lose in relative terms (i.e. as a proportion of all the activities of knowledge transfer). This prediction is based on two observations. First, the increase of physical mobility might be viewed as efficient when knowledge transfer grows from the very few to the few. In the growth from the few to the many, however, it may no longer be viewed as a very efficient way of using resources. Second, physical mobility was valuable as a means of “experiential learning” (i.e. as collecting surprising experiences in a loosely structured setting of learning). In the process of further growth of boundary-crossing knowledge transfer, however, more targeted modes of knowledge transfer should gain ground.

### **Validation and recognition**

The mechanisms of

- approval of higher education system elements (such as institutions, programmes, types of degrees, etc.), including mechanisms of chartering, accreditation or other modes of approval, as well as of
- certification, or the assessment of individual achievement related to approval (degree-granting, licencing, etc.),

tend to be a strong domain of control or supervision on the part of national governments (or regional governments in federal systems). Strong involvement of government in these matters is sometimes criticised for infringing on academic freedom and university autonomy. However, one could also argue that these are most legitimate areas of governmental involvement in higher education. Three observations support such a view:

- In the process of approval and certification, a balance has to be found between an academician's inclination to pursue knowledge for its own sake and the societal expectation of relevance.
- Approval and certification have to bridge the gap between dissent in academia over quality and difficulties of measuring academic quality, and customers' needs for transparency.
- The frequently chosen option in areas of high-level expertise to leave the rating of quality to the experts themselves (the scholars, the representatives of the higher education system, the professions, etc.) often leads to dis-information and a distortion in order to serve one's own interest of reputation and exclusiveness. Therefore, a need seems to exist for at least a counter-checking neutral player as the government ought to be.

The strong national role played in approval and certification, however, poses problems in the process of internationalisation. Governments of individual countries are no longer the obvious neutral and fair judges for the purpose of approval. Also the receiving institutions of mobility, which could be viewed as the obvious judges of the competencies of incoming students and staff, cannot be viewed as neutral and fair. They are likely to rate the achievements of incoming scholars or students lower if these achievements are not exactly identical to those of home scholars and students. On the other hand any other actor, for example an international accreditation or certification agency, might not be well suited to appropriately take into account the specifics of the host country of the mobile students and academics.

The growing need for establishing mechanisms suitable to make appropriate decisions on the equivalence of competences acquired by mobile students in comparison to non-mobile students in the receiving institutions (the same holds true for beginner students, for graduates and for applicants of advanced study programmes) has led to two responses (de Wit 1995; Teichler 1991; van Damme 2002):

- the increase of “thumb-rule” estimates of equivalence, and
- the detailed measurement of quality.

For various reasons, one could have expected a stronger response in the latter direction, the establishment of clear equivalence and quality measurements. For example, with the help of achievement tests of individual persons, internationally controlled bottom-line accreditation or quality seals, comparative quality ratings of institutions and programmes. One could have expected this for several reasons. One, evaluation and accreditation activities experienced a boom anyway. Two, European countries vary substantially according to the extent to which the different universities are considered similar in quality or vertically highly stratified and, three, most experts do not believe that the quality of higher education in the various European countries is more or less the same. Moreover, it is often argued that the expansion of higher education as well as the growing competition between institutions of higher education as a consequence of the “globalisation” is likely to increase the heterogeneity of standards and quality (see for example Campbell and van der Wende 2000; Kehm 2001; OECD 1999).

But the opposite holds true. We note a rapid expansion in measures of formal (i.e. not qualitative) standardisation combined with calls for facilitating of recognition in the case of mobility. The following measures are in the process of being implemented:

- The Lisbon Convention of 1997 calls for the recognition of prior achievements by the host country and the host institution unless there is clear evidence that the achievements are not comparable (Council of Europe 1997).
- The Bologna Declaration of 1999 suggests standardizing more or less the length of study programmes all over Europe (see Barblan 1999; Kampf 2002; Reichert and Wächter 2000).
- Already since the late 1980s, various supra-national bodies began to call for the introduction of the “diploma supplement” (see Berg and Teichler 1988) in order to present the major elements of study and the achievements of the graduates in an internationally more readable way.
- Since the late 1980s the European Union has advocated introducing ECTS (see European Commission 1994), a European credit transfer system, in order to compare study activities and achievements more easily and to grant recognition with a strong reference to the workload of students.

All these mechanisms suggest that if a mobile student has successfully participated abroad in a study programme similar to that provided by their own institution, one should recognise his or her prior study based

on trust that the quality of study abroad is more or less the same rather than check the quality level in a detailed manner.

What does the emphasis on formal “thumb-rule” equivalence mean? Does it imply more homogeneity in higher education across Europe according to the qualitative level is taken for granted? Are the mechanisms seen as contributing to a greater quality homogeneity? Will these measures just facilitate recognition and mobility among institutions and programmes that are considered to be similar in quality? Does one take for granted that newly needed selection mechanisms for qualified applicants will be done by other actors (the receiving institutions of higher education, national or international accreditation agencies, etc.) only for sub-sectors of the higher education system? Is formal standardisation as such very valuable for measuring quality? Do we need more formal maps of the higher education under conditions of increasing diversity even if we do not seek detailed measures of quality?

### **Structural variety or homogeneity across countries**

In the past, national higher education systems differed from each other in many respects. Among other things, the enormous variety in the quota of an age group enrolling in higher education from countries with similar economic wealth suggested that higher education institutions had different functions in these countries. Countries varied in their entry requirements, notably with respect to prior years of schooling and types of secondary schooling. Admission regulations set further diverse conditions for entry. Higher education programmes varied between countries as far as the types of programmes and institutions, the length of study programmes and the levels of degrees. Funding modes often were relevant for tuition fees but also for possibilities of international cooperation in research. Finally, we note substantial differences between countries in the structures of academic staff, their functions, and their career ladders, which might have had an enormous impact on staff mobility.

Reforms were often undertaken with salient structural impact. Over the last three or four decades we note in European countries a number of trends: opening access to higher education to students from various types of secondary education, the establishment of vocationally oriented colleges and the introduction of short study programmes, the upgrading

of non-university programmes and institutions to university programmes and institutions, the restructuring of academic staff in various directions, the introduction and abolishment of tuition fees or a growing dependence of university budgets from additional income. Reform concepts were driven by a mix of national traditions and other national specifics, by internationally spreading ideas of “modernity” in higher education as well as by political options with respect to expansion, equality of opportunity, technological investment and other dimensions. The ideas of modernity and the preference for certain political options within a single country were certainly influenced by experiences acquired in international cooperation and mobility. Therefore, one might expect that in periods of increasing internationalisation an intensification of debates will occur in the various countries about desirable structures of one’s own higher education system.

Structural differences between national systems are always a possible barrier to international cooperation and mobility because there is a risk that a cooperating partner could interpret the difference as an indication that the partner institution, staff or students were not sufficiently similar to engage in fruitful exchange, cooperation or mobility. On the other hand, differences between countries can also be viewed as an asset. They offer the opportunity for mobile or otherwise cooperating partners to learn from an environment which is in contrast from that at home. Partly because of the value of such contrast and partly because of the strong persistence of different national models, until recently those favouring student mobility called for both respecting diversity between countries and for excepting some common formal standards of equivalence. Until the 1980s, the activities of various supra-national bodies in Europe involved in promoting or facilitating student mobility all agreed that a diversity of models according to types of higher education institutions, programmes, length of study programmes, and types of degrees was desirable or acceptable if one considered years of required study as the criteria of “convertability”.

Thus, structural differences between national higher education systems did not turn out to be a major barrier to international mobility and cooperation in Europe. In contrast, intra-country diversity was more frequently viewed as a barrier. If a high degree of homogeneity of the national higher education system was taken for granted, the national governments, representatives of higher education institutions or representatives of professions from different countries could negotiate with their partners abroad about equivalences and recognition. If the national higher education systems were internally diverse, equivalences

had to be resolved at the level of the individual higher education institution or the individual study programme.

The secular trends in higher education towards quantitative expansion and greater relevance, as well as the recent favour for deregulation and managerialism created both pressures for greater diversity within national systems of higher education and for more imitation of the most successful sector of the system. Altogether, intra-national diversity seemed to grow.

If one assumes that cooperation and mobility is more fruitful amidst only modest differences between partners in quality, growing diversification within national systems of higher education could create a need for measuring and labelling quality differences more clearly in order to help make appropriate selection decisions in matching cooperation and mobility with a limited range of partners. In this context, formal elements of the system, such as length of study and type of institution, were bound to lose relevance for indicating the level of quality one could expect at partner institutions.

As already pointed out, many European governments and institutions of higher education reacted in the so-called “Bologna process” to what they perceived as globalisation pressures by standardizing the lengths of study programmes and types of degree (Haug et al. 1999; Haug and Tauch 2001; Teichler 2001). It remains to be seen, however, whether a structural convergence can successfully counteract the trend towards increasing qualitative diversity. It will also be important to note whether structural convergence will facilitate the recognition of study achievements of mobile students. One should not be surprised to eventually witness the opposite, a growing range of activities of measuring tiny differences of the quality in higher education.

### **Strategic action and system steering in the process of internationalisation and globalisation**

Experts tend to agree that substantial changes have taken place in Europe since the 1980s as far as steering national higher education institutions and the administration of the individual higher education institutions are concerned. In all European countries we note, at different points in time and developing somewhat differently, a process whereby governments reduce their direct supervision and control of higher education and try to shape higher education more strongly through target-setting and performance-based funding. Individual

higher education institutions become more powerful strategic actors and they establish a managerial system characterised by stronger executive powers of the institutional leadership and by increased evaluation activities, which serve both reflection and improvement on the part of the academics as well as accountability to government and the public at large.

The idea to undertake these changes spread internationally, but the core of the reforms were changes of the regulatory systems, characterised in each country by many specific features. However, developments linked to what was called internationalisation and globalisation were interrelated with national reforms designed to strengthen the strategic roles of the individual higher education institutions.

In recent years higher education institutions or their departments expected to become or often actually became stronger strategic actors with respect to internationalisation than they had been in the past. There were various factors in play:

- The number of international activities increased and came to be seen as increasingly important.
- The growing diversity within national higher education systems amidst increasing international activities forced universities to identify their specific tasks and functions as well as to promote them.
- The changing philosophies of steering, governance and management lead of higher education institutions to become more strategic in various respects, and this also led to more strategic reasoning and action regarding international matters.
- Targeted efforts were made to encourage higher education institutions to be more strategic on international matters. The most prominent example was the decision to require universities in Europe to formulate a European Policy Statement if they wanted to have SOCRATES support (see Barblan et al. 1998).

In recent years, efforts of actors within higher education institutions in Europe were forced to become more strategic and the term “globalisation” gained enormous popularity irrespective of whether globalisation was more strongly interpreted as an opportunity or as threat. The increasing use of the term globalisation certainly reflects two notions.

- First, after a period of a strong focus on the region Europe, the view spread that higher education should give more consideration to the opportunities arising with communication, cooperation, and mobility in other areas of the world.
- Second, higher education institutions got the impression that their fate was now determined to a lesser extent than in the past by their

national or regional government. Governments now decide to a lesser extent than in the past where the individual higher education institution is located in a world structural map of higher education. They also guarantee the funding for higher education institutions to a lesser extent than in the past. Higher education institutions are now expected to compete both for government and other funds (cf. Kehm 1999; Lauterbach 2001; van der Wende et al. 1999).

This does not mean that national and cultural contexts more or less lose their importance, nor does it mean that national or regional government policies play a marginal role with respect to international activities of higher education institutions. The strategic options which higher education institutions, programmes or individual scholars can choose are strongly shaped by factors such as:

- the economic strength of the country,
- the international status of the home country language,
- the academic reputation of the national system of higher education, or
- the size of the country.

Also, national higher education policies do not merely lose ground in shaping higher education along the process of internationalisation, but in some respects become more targeted and more important (cf. Källemark and van der Wende 1997). For example, governments of individual countries try to exert a strong influence on the regulations shaping the world order of higher education where market forces might determine the details. National policies regarding student immigration, graduates, and academics are increasingly seen to be important. Last but not least, national governmental policies play a major role in the extent to which they encourage and support study, teaching and research abroad or discourage it in the name of increasing the export balance in higher education and research.

One might argue that the internationalisation process takes place concurrently with a certain degree of de-governmentalisation in the daily life of higher education in terms of administrative control and determining the position of the individual higher education institution on a national map. This de-governmentalisation affected the international arena even more strongly because governments also only had limited control of international cooperation between institutions in the past. But nations and strategic policies of national governments continue to play a major role in setting the frames for international communication, cooperation and mobility as well as for international competition. Therefore, the frequent use of the term “globalisation” might be based on misunderstandings.

One might go a step further and ask whether the currently dominant ideas about the best ways of steering, governing, and managing higher education or the best distribution of power among the various actors in higher education have been developed at a time when international communication, cooperation and mobility were viewed as less important than they are now. Do these modes of steering, governance, and managing as well as these power distributions still serve the universities in the best way, particularly in a time when internationalisation has become so important? It might be valuable to make use of the remaining time of public attention and willingness for reform and explore which modes of steering and management are most suitable for the continuing trend of internationalisation.

### **Conclusion**

The process of expanding internationalisation, both in the context relevant for higher education as well as of the inner life of higher education, goes its own way. Internationalisation received substantial attention in the public debate during the 1990s. Based on previous trends of public debates we might expect that internationalisation will soon lose its priority status in the public debate. Thereafter, problems will have no chance of being resolved through major political campaigns and additional resource allocations.

In Europe, three terms are often employed to characterise the internationalisation process: internationalisation, Europeanisation and globalisation but each addresses the process of internationalisation with a different emphasis.

Europeanisation is the regional version of internationalisation or globalisation. It implies the experience that the academic relationships in Europe differ from those between Europe and many other regions of the world in terms of less culture contrast and opportunities for horizontal communication, cooperation, and community as well as of potentials of integration and joint action to shape the system. The phenomena of Europeanisation most frequently referred to since about 1990 were initially horizontal mobility and cooperation (notably "ERASMUS") and subsequently standardisation of study programmes and degrees ("The Bologna process").

Internationalisation can best be defined as the totality of substantial changes in the context and inner life of higher education relative to an increasing frequency of border-crossing activities amidst a persistence of

national systems, even though some signs of “denationalisation” might be observed. Phenomena often viewed as characteristic for internationalisation are increasing knowledge transfer, physical mobility, cooperation and international education and research.

Globalisation initially seemed to be defined as the totality of substantial changes in the context and inner life of higher education related to growing interrelationships between different parts of the world whereby national borders are blurred or even seem to vanish. In recent years the term “globalisation” is substituted for “internationalisation” in the public debate on higher education, whereby a shift of meaning takes place. No interest is paid anymore to whether the phenomena are linked to a blurring or vanishing of borders. Rather, the term tends to be used for any supra-regional phenomenon related to higher education (anything which seems to take world-wide) and/or anything on a global scale related to higher education characterised by market and competition (notably international competition for status and reputation as well as commercial knowledge transfer across borders).

This trend towards greater use of the term “globalisation” is certainly indicative of the extent to which the public debate on higher education is currently absorbed by issues of managerialism and resource acquisition. However, it might be viewed as surprising in two respects. First, as already stated, little interest seems to exist anymore in questions about whether increasing importance of a global scale and the increasing role of market-forces in higher education are really combined with a crumbling of national borders. Second, it is surprising to note how much the debate on global phenomena in higher education suddenly focuses on marketisation, competition and management in higher education. Other terms, such as knowledge society, global village, global understanding or global learning, are hardly taken into consideration.

The latter phenomenon seems to suggest that the major “global forces” relevant to higher education are only those of “turbo-capitalism” (cf. Currie and Newson 1998). Is this a social construct spreading in higher education because of the increase in managerialism that tends to limit its view on managerial and operational issues? One could argue that the actors in higher education systems could tear down the limitations of this scope. They could ask substantive questions as well about the need of social cohesion on the globe or the ecological survival, for example. Terms such as “knowledge society”, “global village”, “global social cohesion”, “global learning” and “global understanding” (cf. Altbach 2000; Husén 1989; Lambert 1994; Opper et al. 1990) suggest that higher education could raise their views above the operational

issues and address the substantive “international” or “global” mandates of higher education.

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